

R 201314Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4699
INFO CDC ATLANTA GA
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS

UNCLAS PORT LOUIS 000255

DEPT FOR AF/E AND AF/EPS
DEPT FOR OES/IHB
DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS
HHS FOR CDC
JOHANNESBURG FOR RCO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [KFLO](#) [KPAO](#) [KSAF](#) [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [MP](#)

SUBJECT: H1N1 CATCHES HOLD IN MAURITIUS

¶1. SUMMARY. Since the first confirmed case H1N1 flu in June, the Government of Mauritius (GOM) has confirmed five deaths and 44 laboratory-confirmed cases, and expects the number to grow in coming months. While the GOM urges the public not to panic, hospitals are reporting difficulty coping with the daily influx of patients. Schools remain open for the moment and the GOM has decided to restrict H1N1 testing to pregnant women and those in intensive care.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. A 25-year old French tourist became the first H1N1 case recorded in Mauritius in June after having visited Argentina a few days prior to arriving on the island. The tourist was confined to his hotel room and recovered after medical treatment. Early on, the GOM focused on prevention and detection measures at the airport and seaport, including the installation of a thermal scanner. Even as cases spread around the island, with a number of the infected not having traveled abroad, the GOM continues the intense screening effort for incoming travelers. As of August 19, the Government of Mauritius (GOM) has confirmed five deaths and 44 laboratory-confirmed cases of H1N1 flu and expects the number to grow with another six to eight weeks of winter season remaining.

¶3. During a recent press conference, Prime Minister Ramgoolam urged the population not to panic, noting that additional hospital staff has been recruited and that flu clinics have been established inside major hospitals and local community health centers to accommodate patients suffering from flu symptoms, while those confirmed to have the H1N1 strain are being treated in isolation wards. The media, however, report that at least two major hospitals are having trouble coping with the daily influx of patients, despite the measures taken by the health authorities.

¶4. Even in the face of mounting pressure from teachers and medical practitioners' unions, the GOM has ruled out the closure of public schools. As part of a public campaign, the Government advised parents to keep sick children at home for at least seven days. Pupils with flu-like symptoms attending schools are provided with masks and cared for in separate rooms prior to being sent to hospitals for treatment. The government intensified its school sensitization campaigns on basic hygiene, including proper hand washing. The government also announced that all schools will be disinfected over the course of this weekend.

¶5. Most recently, the government announced that H1N1 tests will henceforth be restricted to pregnant women and those who are in intensive care; this is in part because the GOM laboratory has the capacity to perform only 12 tests for H1N1 a day. In addition, the results of the tests, as well as information on all further H1N1-related deaths, will only be disclosed to the World Health Organization. In a welcome change for doctors, the GOM decided to put the onus for treatment of all flu patients on doctors, who may now decide whether or not to prescribe Tamiflu. Previously, doctors were restricted by the Ministry of Health when treating patients, and could not prescribe Tamiflu without an H1N1 positive test.

BLASER